

# Using the Nominal Group Technique to Design an Appropriate Communication Strategy Among Strategic Procurement and Internal Stakeholders

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**Background/Purpose:** The implementation process of the procurement strategy requires consensus among internal stakeholders. An effective procurement strategy aligns with specific business requirements and accommodates the individual introversion of internal stakeholders. From the latter, we formulate our research question: How is the classification of internal procurement stakeholders designed in the validation of the procurement strategy? The research objective is to present the result in the form of a schematic description and a recommendation for a communication strategy, based on insights from existing theoretical knowledge and the formulation of professional references.

**Methods:** Nominal Group Technique (NGT) with 13 participants has been applied to analyze viewpoints on procurement functions. To ensure reliability and validity, Cronbach's alpha test, Spearman coefficient, and t-tests have been used.

**Results and Conclusion:** Study categorizes internal procurement stakeholders into four groups based on their stance towards strategy implementation: positive, cautiously positive, negatively independent, and negative stakeholders. For each group, we recommend a tailored communication strategy that includes elements such as informing, guiding, motivating, and providing credible data. The research results offer important insights into the dynamics among organizational stakeholders and how communication impacts the success of strategy implementation. We have found that understanding and adapting to various types of stakeholders are crucial for success, from those highly involved and positively inclined to those with the potential to oppose or hinder implementation. Employing specific communication strategies for each group can significantly enhance the chances of successful implementation and sustainable execution of strategies.

**Keywords:** *Procurement strategy, Internal stakeholder management, Communication strategy, Nominal Group Technique, Internal communication*

## 1 Introduction

Supplier marketing is the practice of organizations actively interacting with suppliers, fostering robust supplier relationships, and generating value for suppliers with the

expectation of receiving reciprocal value in return. Strategic procurement, a vital but relatively under-researched field, entails systematic approaches aligning with an organization's goals, encompassing sourcing, contract management, and supplier relations (O'Brien, 2019). It focuses

on long-term planning, risk management, and value creation, enhancing efficiency and competitive edge (Tuncel et al., 2020). Our study addresses this research gap by proposing a novel, practical model for classifying internal stakeholders in strategic procurement during strategy validation and devising effective communication strategies (O'Brien 2019). Central to strategic procurement is the development and implementation of procurement strategies, with strategy validation as a crucial step to align internal stakeholder or customer consensus, recognizing their diverse assumptions impacting strategy execution (O'Brien, 2019). Our research focuses on identifying methods to classify internal stakeholders in specific organizations, ensuring alignment with the organization's overall procurement strategy, and determining effective communication (Xie et al., 2020). approaches to gain their consensus. We aim to clarify stakeholder classification (Murray-Webster & Simon, 2006) from a procurement perspective, presenting a schema for strategic procurement professionals. This schema is based on stakeholder interest in strategies, facilitating the management of communication during the strategy validation process (Ginige et al., 2018).

Effective communication planning with internal stakeholders is vital (Rowlinson, et al. 2009) in validating procurement strategies. It involves a structured and planned approach to disseminating both specific and general information across various areas. The process begins with identifying internal stakeholders, followed by selecting appropriate communication methods for engaging with them (Ortbal et al., 2016). We recommend a stepwise approach, illustrated in the process diagram provided, for classifying internal stakeholders from most opposing to most supportive. Based on classification Ginige et al., (2018) tailored communication strategies (García, 2012) are then recommended.

## 2 Literature Review

### 2.1 Procurement Strategy Implementation

Strategic planning (Dimitrova & Gallucci 2017) in organizations is crucial particularly for managing procurement strategies (O'Brien, 2019). where the validation of the strategy is a key phase. This process involves a range of procurement scenarios and diverse stakeholders with varying interests, which can sometimes conflict. These conflicts, when managed effectively, can enhance efficiency and spur innovation (Chinyio & Olomolaiye 2009). A significant challenge in this process is communication planning. It is often mistakenly assumed that all stakeholders will interpret messages uniformly (Ke, 2011). Therefore, ensuring precision and assertiveness in communica-

tion strategies is vital.

In strategy implementation, category managers must use innovative communication methods, underpinned by research and analyses of procurement category characteristics. As category management encompasses a broad organizational scope, it's vital to include stakeholders in the communication plan. This ensures that crucial messages related to the category project are effectively conveyed (Voegeli & Finger 2021).

Effective management of procurement strategies hinges on accurately identifying and understanding internal stakeholders and their interests. In strategy formulation, it's essential to categorize stakeholders by their power and interest, assessing their potential support or opposition (Cordell & Thompson, 2018). Internal stakeholders, ranging from individuals to groups within the organization, often have diverse interests and perspectives. Recognizing these differences (Bisung & Dickin, 2019) and creating synergy (Dimitrova & Gallucci, 2017) among various stakeholders is key to achieving consensus and success in strategy implementation.

### 2.2 The classification of internal stakeholders

Effective management of internal stakeholders, through understanding their interests and implementing clear action plans, is essential for successful procurement strategy implementation. This involves a critical analysis phase to identify and assess each stakeholder's influence and importance in strategy execution. Category managers play a key role in recognizing and addressing diverse stakeholder requirements, with the goal of minimizing conflicts, obstacles, and risks (Jilani, 2018) thereby facilitating effective collaboration and achieving organizational objectives.

Involving internal stakeholders is key for building trust, crucial for effective communication and mutual understanding, thereby enhancing strategy success through their knowledge and experience (Savage et al., 1991). Yet, caution is necessary, as stakeholders wield power and can impact strategy implementation positively or negatively (Ginige et al., 2018).

Classifying internal stakeholders is vital for creating a useful stakeholder list, assessing their impacts, and managing them effectively to achieve organizational objectives. This process includes identifying, understanding, and categorizing stakeholders for successful collaboration in activity implementation. Rowlinson et al. (2009) describes this as involving information gathering, examining stakeholder interests, strategy definition, behavior prediction, and implementing a communication strategy.

Literature review reveals that effective stakeholder understanding can be enhanced by using data in various forms, including graphical and visual representations<sup>10</sup>.

Various methods have been proposed for classifying internal stakeholders, including categorization based on risk and cooperation potential (Mitchell et al., 1997). Then classification by influence power and importance of activities, development of comprehensive processes from stakeholder identification to communication strategies (Turner & Jain, 2002). Fletcher et al., (2003) proposed emphasis on stakeholder management in relation to hierarchical structure and operational scope. Appropriate classification methods are essential for effective internal stakeholder management and control.

The 1997 model by Mitchell, Agle, and Wood classifies stakeholders based on power, legitimacy, and urgency. Power refers to the ability to influence the organization, legitimacy is the perceived validity of their claim, and urgency is the need for immediate attention (Wood, Mitchell, Agle & Bryan, 2021).

The Stakeholder Circle methodology, is introduced by Bourne and Walker (2006) as a process for categorizing internal stakeholders that includes identification, prioritization, visualization, strategy development, and communication effectiveness monitoring. While categorization often uses specific terms, caution is advised against labels like “time bomb” or “dangerous” due to potential subjectivity and risks (Chinyio & Olomolaiye 2009). Stakeholder analysis, an important management element (Raum 2018), helps identify stakeholders with significant impacts and informs engagement strategies (Ginige et al., 2018).

Effective stakeholder management in procurement necessitates multiple aspects: identifying key stakeholders, understanding their interests, leveraging their knowledge, preparing for challenges, considering their needs, and implementing engagement strategies. Managing internal stakeholders effectively involves recognizing their distinct requirements and using a 2 x 2 matrix based on power and interest for classification. This includes strategies like prioritizing collaboration for high power, high interest stakeholders, ensuring satisfaction for high power, low interest ones, monitoring needs of low power, low interest stakeholders, and regularly updating those with low power but high interest. Continuously updating this matrix is crucial for identifying stakeholders with potential unexpected demands, ensuring successful execution of procurement strategies (Chinyio & Olomolaiye 2009).

Authors like Raum (2018), emphasize the importance of analyzing internal stakeholders in strategic management, focusing on their roles, influence, and potential conflicts. Effective stakeholder management (Chinyio & Olomolaiye 2009) involves key aspects such as informing stakeholders, achieving commercial objectives, controlling their influence, and incorporating their opinions in decision-making. This encompasses the identification of stakeholders, understanding their influence and interests, establishing effective communication, managing expectations, and involving them in decision-making processes.

The overarching consensus underscores the vital role of active stakeholder management in the successful execution of procurement strategies, fostering understanding, building trust, minimizing conflicts, and nurturing long-term beneficial relationships.

Recognizing internal stakeholders is key for understanding their interests and influence on strategy implementation (Ginige, Amaratunga and Haigh, 2018). The first step, as advised Chinyio & Olomolaiye (2009), is to create a comprehensive and clear list of stakeholders, which is foundational for subsequent analysis. Prioritization and ranking them in a table or graphic provide an overview of key stakeholders. Identifying intersections and potential conflicts among stakeholders, as suggest Ortbal et al., (2016) is critical in stakeholder management.

Developing effective communication strategies is crucial for addressing the challenges inherent in managing internal stakeholders, particularly in complex scenarios marked by diverse interests. The significance of managing internal stakeholders is further highlighted by its role in understanding their concerns and expectations, disseminating information, and identifying uncertainties. These elements collectively enhance internal relationship management and overall process efficiency (Voegeli & Finger, 2021).

Stakeholder analysis extends beyond influence and interest to include power, support, and relationship, visually represented for clarity on maps. Stakeholders are classified into categories based on these dimensions. Key Stakeholders, with high power and interest, greatly influence implementations and include executives and advisors. Satisfied Stakeholders, often regulatory bodies, have high power but low interest and need periodic updates. Informed Stakeholders, like local or community groups, show high interest but low power, requiring regular communication and consideration. Low-Impact Stakeholders, with minimal power and interest, have a limited impact on risks, but their management is crucial if risks increase (Chinyio & Olomolaiye 2009).

Difference between internal (primary) and external (secondary) stakeholders based on their connection to a project. Internal stakeholders are directly involved, often contributing financing and having a contractual connection, while external stakeholders, though affected, are not critical to the project's survival. Stakeholders are categorized as supportive, neutral, or unsupportive, with efforts made to shift unsupportive stakeholders towards neutrality or support (Rowlinson, et al. (2009).

For successful procurement strategy implementation, stakeholder involvement is key, aligning their interests with strategy outcomes. This involves preparing a stakeholder list and assessing their potential impact on the project. Stakeholders are classified by power and interest, with tools like classification maps aiding in identifying various types, from blockers or critics to advocates or supporters

(Ginige et al., 2018).

The influence of internal stakeholders is linked to their power, stemming from their capacity to persuade or coerce. Hester uses fuzzy logic to categorize stakeholder attitudes on a scale, assigning weights to these attitudes to facilitate the transformation of non-supportive stakeholders into supporters (Chinyio & Olomolaiye 2009).

Identifying key stakeholders, whether individuals or groups, is crucial in stakeholder categorization (Chinyio & Olomolaiye 2009). Once stakeholders are identified, the next step is to define activities and integrate them based on their levels of support. Different models for categorizing internal stakeholders facilitate their identification, classification, and determination of appropriate engagement activities. Continuous monitoring of their power and interests is essential for effectively managing potential negative impacts (Chinyio & Olomolaiye 2009). Caution is advised in labelling stakeholders with terms like “Sleeping Giant” or “Time Bomb,” as these can be counterproductive and sensitive, particularly if stakeholders have access to the categorization model (Ginige et al., 2018). Ensuring controlled access, careful handling, and maintaining confidentiality are crucial due to the sensitive nature of the categorization model (O’Brien, 2019).

Key principles for managing internal stakeholders include actively monitoring their interests and demands, respecting organizational procedures and stakeholder operations, identifying interdependencies, ensuring fair distribution of benefits and burdens, collaborating to mitigate risks, being aware of potential conflicts of interest, and avoiding activities that could jeopardize human rights or increase risks. Effective conflict management is crucial for successful strategy implementation. Emphasizing open communication and thorough reporting is vital, alongside pre-assessing stakeholders’ needs and expectations. Building positive interpersonal relationships fosters trust, collaboration, and reduces conflict risks, preventing delays and additional costs. Early identification of potential actions, tensions, or issues is key to managing them effectively, ensuring timely responses and safeguarding strategy or project execution (Chinyio & Olomolaiye 2009).

The literature underscores the criticality of strategic planning in procurement, focusing on category managers’ roles, their innovative communication methods, and stakeholder involvement. It emphasizes the need to identify and analyze internal stakeholders, considering their influence and importance for successful strategy execution. Stakeholder involvement is key to building trust and enhancing strategy effectiveness. Analyzing stakeholders’ power and interest through classification matrices is crucial, as are communication strategies in stakeholder management. Continuous monitoring and conflict management through open communication are vital for maintaining harmonious stakeholder relationships (O’Brien, 2019).

### 2.3 Communication strategies with internal stakeholders

The critical aspects of “strategic communication,” where “strategic” indicates deliberate, planned activities, and “communication” significantly affects an organization’s strategic goals (García, 2022). Strategic communication management involves systematic planning and implementation of information flow through selected media, targeting specific messages to appropriate audiences at the right times (Chinyio & Olomolaiye 2009). Effective stakeholder involvement and tailored communication strategies are essential for achieving organizational goals. Building trust through effective communication among stakeholders is vital, as is maintaining a shared focus on organizational goals. Communication takes various forms, including verbal, non-verbal, written, and digital channels. Organizational communication flows through downward, upward, and horizontal pathways. Downward communication flows from top to middle management, then to subordinates. Upward communication channels feedback from lower-level employees to top management, while horizontal communication occurs among leadership, employees, owners, and department heads. Effective communication requires proper timing, simplicity, clarity, appropriateness, credibility, and style. Regular meetings and presentations, underpinned by thorough analyses, aid in effective communication. Building relationships among stakeholders through regular interviews is crucial for successful engagement (Chinyio & Olomolaiye 2009).

Gong emphasizes the necessity of fact-based communication strategies, balancing between direct and indirect approaches, and managing risks systematically through identification, analysis, and prioritization. Understanding the current situation is essential before developing strategies that align with stakeholders’ needs and interests. In organizations, stakeholder relationships involve key figures who can influence organizational goals. Internal stakeholders, characterized by their influence, legitimacy, and ownership, include diverse groups affecting the organization’s strategy. Stakeholder management is pivotal, requiring the identification and understanding of stakeholders’ unique demands and rights. Gathering and analyzing information is crucial for effective collaboration and support in strategy execution (Chinyio & Olomolaiye 2009).

Internal stakeholders are instrumental in executing procurement strategies, advocating for interests and collective commitment to projects (Månsson, 2018). Differentiating between internal stakeholders involved in organizational activities and external stakeholders affected by these activities is essential (Jilani, 2018). Effective interpersonal communication is key to aligning and harmonizing stakeholders’ interests and perceptions (Chinyio & Olomolaiye 2009).

Gaining internal stakeholder support and consensus is essential for successful procurement strategy implementation. This requires strategies that positively influence stakeholders and minimize adverse effects. Developing a comprehensive communication plan is crucial for consensus-building. Stakeholder communication management involves identifying assumption discrepancies, understanding strategy requirements, analyzing stakeholders' needs and interests, and evaluating the effectiveness of communication strategies. Effective communication with internal stakeholders is vital to harmonize relationships and align objectives. Understanding the significant impact of stakeholders on strategy execution is key. Employing tactical relationship management tools, such as matrices and categorizations, aids in effective communication. Acknowledging and responding appropriately to the diverse influences and demands of internal stakeholders is crucial for effective strategy management and implementation. Authors Chinyio V Olomolaiye (2009) outlined four tailored communication strategies for stakeholder management based on risk levels and stakeholder interest. The Collaboration Strategy focuses on stakeholder involvement in high-risk, high-interest scenarios to reduce risks and increase support. The Defence Strategy, for high-risk, low-interest situations, manages conflicts to maintain stability, building trust through clear strategic communication. The Involvement Strategy, suitable for low-risk, low-interest contexts, maintains relationships through continuous communication and information exchange. The Monitoring Strategy, applied in low-risk, high-interest situations, emphasizes closely monitoring stakeholders' interests and needs to keep them informed and engaged.

The literature emphasizes strategic communication and stakeholder management within organizations, highlighting the need for deliberate, fact-based communication

strategies aligned with organizational objectives. It underscores the importance of various organizational communication pathways, such as downward, upward, and horizontal, stressing the need for clear, timely, and credible interactions. The critical role of internal stakeholders in executing procurement strategies is emphasized, requiring comprehensive identification, understanding, and management of their diverse interests, expectations, and influences on projects. Effective communication is key, with tactical relationship management recommended for its efficacy. Furthermore, the literature suggests customized communication strategies like Collaboration, Defense, Involvement, and Monitoring to manage stakeholders according to different risk levels and interests, underlining the necessity of flexible communication methods for varied stakeholder contexts.

### 3 Materials and Methods

#### 3.1 The survey samples

Our research targets procurement specialists, specifically in the strategic procurement sector. Given the limited size of the professional community in this field, we focused on selecting experts with a minimum of three years of procurement experience, at least five years of overall work experience, and an age threshold of 25 years or older. These selected experts, drawn from medium-sized and large companies, were chosen based on criteria specified in the Companies Act of the Republic of Slovenia (ZGD-1), Article 55.

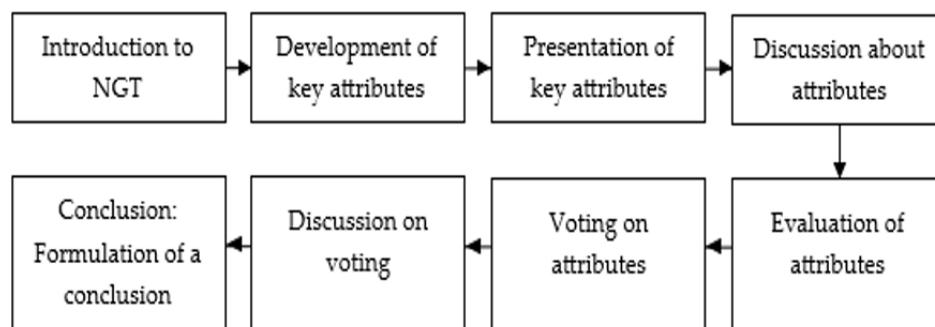


Figure 1: The approach to implementing the Nominal Group Technique

### 3.2 Nominal Group Technique

Our research utilized the NGT to explore stakeholder classification in strategic procurement, involving 19 strategic procurement employees responsible for strategy design and stakeholder collaboration. The NGT's systematic approach enabled us to gain insights into current classification practices within modern organizations. This qualitative method, initially developed for healthcare (in 1960s) emphasizes individual perspectives and achieves consensus through a structured process, blending interview and focus group elements. The NGT process, effective both in-person and online, involves participants expressing their views anonymously, thus encouraging open discussion without bias (Vogelnic, 2016; Jones & Hunter, 1995; Mullen et al., 2021; Mason et al., 2021).

The online approach (Fig. 1) allowed us to efficiently conduct our research while ensuring broad participant engagement. The facilitator introduces the topic, followed by individual idea contribution and group discussions (Vogelnic, 2016). Participants then rank these ideas, with the facilitator consolidating and presenting the final rankings. In our study, we adapted NGT for an online format using MS Teams, ensuring inclusivity and wider participation, as outlined in the research procedure.

Confirmation for participation was received from 14 candidates via email, followed by coordinating a meeting on MS Teams, with consideration for COVID-19 pandemic guidelines. On the meeting day, 13 participants attended, aligning with the recommended focus group size (Vogelnic, 2016), 9 to 12 experts. Though smaller groups are recommended for more in-depth discussions, with successful applications using 4 to 7 participants (Chiwire et al., 2022). We began with a 10–15-minute casual conversation to explain NGT procedures and foster a comfortable communication atmosphere, presenting the NGT execution processes and research purpose, particularly focusing on our research question. During the meeting, we introduced descriptions similar like Ginige et al., (2018) of internal stakeholders, such as “Sleeping Giant” and “Time Bomb”. Assessing the relationship (Hester, 2015) between stakeholders' interest and power on a 5-point scale, we evaluated them from extremely interested to disinterested, aligning with the described stakeholder types. We then applied four communication strategies for stakeholder management as per established procedures (Chinyio & Olomolaiye 2009).

In our study, we employed the NGT to categorize internal stakeholders in strategic procurement. The process, lasting about 50 minutes, involved outlining procurement strategy management, guiding participants to identify and discuss internal stakeholders, and consolidating ten unique stakeholder profiles. These profiles include:

**MENTOR:** Strong, influential, and highly interested, requiring careful attention.

**FRIEND:** Low power but high interest and positive, serving as key advisors.

**REBEL:** Influential with high interest but negative attitudes, needing strategic management.

**OBSTRUCTOR:** Low power, highly obstructive, necessitating involvement despite challenges.

**SUPPORTER:** Influential and interested, albeit sometimes passive, requiring active engagement.

**SPECIALIST:** Low power and interest but significant in attitude, needing basic engagement.

**BOMB:** Powerful but low-interest, with a negative approach requiring careful mitigation.

**OPPORTUNIST:** Low energy and interest, demanding cautious monitoring.

**SAFEGUARD:** Interested and positive but indecisive, needing extra analytical verification.

**TACTICIAN:** Moderate interest in decision-making, requiring engagement stimulation.

Participants rated these stakeholders on a scale from 1 to 5 based on their support level. After classifying and discussing these stakeholders, the final step involved reaching group consensus on the descriptions and communication strategies, with the results incorporated into the Results chapter.

### 3.3 Reliability and validity of the method

In our research within the strategic procurement function, we conducted a measurement to ensure the validity, adhering to the principle of measuring precisely what we intended (Vogelnic, 2016). We identified and defined internal stakeholders, akin to types like Sleeping Giant and Time Bomb. Similar to Hester's approach, we categorized stakeholder relationships on a 5-point scale from extremely interested to uninterested. To confirm the reliability of our measurement questions, we employed the Cronbach alpha test (Cronbach, 1951), assessing the reliability coefficient as advised by relevant authors (Stadler et al., 2021; Diedenhofen & Much, 2016).

The Cronbach alpha reliability method used also Črv, (2023); Ball, (2029); Martín Martínez, and Vela Llauradó, (2022) is crucial in verifying the consistency of questionnaire measurements. The alpha coefficient ( $\alpha$ ) ranges from 0 to 1, with values closer to 1 indicating higher internal consistency. A Cronbach alpha value above 0.7 suggests good construct reliability (Diedenhofen & Much, 2016) denoting the reliability of the questionnaire's questions. We used descriptive statistics to present subject data, including respondents' age, total work experience, and procurement experience, demonstrating the participants' expertise. Spearman's correlation coefficient was employed to determine the strength of the correlation between variables, indicating a stronger association (Statstutor, 2019; Yan et al., 2029).

To check the statistical properties of the data, we used a t-test and assessed statistical significance at a significance level of 0.05. A value of (p) less than 0.05 is considered statistically significant (Yan et al., 2029). Statistical significance was calculated using the equation:

$$t = \frac{r_s \sqrt{n-2}}{\sqrt{1-r_s^2}}$$

We adopted four communication strategies for stakeholder management, akin to researchers Chinyio & Olomlaiye (2009). After finalizing the list, we categorized stakeholders by priority and interest, using tables or graphs as per author recommendations, addressing our research question.

## 4 Results

Using the NGT, we gathered and organized data through a structured process, guided by a facilitator. We systematically arranged the data into a table, presenting the descriptions of internal stakeholders, their communication recommendations, and their levels of interest in strategy implementation. These levels ranged from most to least supportive, shedding light on the key aspects of classifying internal stakeholders in a strategically oriented

procurement function. Our study's participant group consisted of eight males and five females, ranging in age from 26 to 58, with an average age of 46.8 years. They had an average service length of 24.4 years, including an average of 15.7 years in procurement.

The reliability of our questionnaire, as indicated by a Cronbach's alpha score of 0.709, falls within the "good" range (Plešnik, 2019; Šćepanović 2020), suggesting a high level of confidence in its reliability. This score, on a scale where 1 represents perfect reliability, confirms the dependability of our research instrument.

To further validate our findings, we employed the Spearman correlation coefficient (rs), which ranges between -1 and +1 (Statstutor, 2019). A near-perfect correlation of rs = 0.997 was observed between age and total work experience. Additionally, strong correlations were found for both total work experience and procurement function experience (rs = 0.664), and between age and procurement function experience (rs = 0.666).

We also conducted a statistical t-test to observe p-values against a significance threshold of 0.0539. Our analysis revealed statistical significance (p) between respondents' age and total work experience (8.75-14), as well as between total work experience and procurement function experience (1.33-02) and between respondents' age and procurement function experience (1.30-02). These findings further reinforce the reliability of the data collected from the respondents.

Table 1: Demographic data of respondents

Respondent	sex	age	Total work experience	Total years in procurement
1	m	44	18	18
2	m	48	25	15
3	m	57	36	32
4	w	49	27	18
5	m	45	21	6
6	w	46	22	12
7	m	58	37	37
8	m	32	7	3
9	m	59	39	6
10	m	55	34	26
11	w	58	38	21
12	w	26	5	4
13	w	32	8	6

Table 2: Display of Nominal Group Technique Results

naming stakeholders	respondents													$\Sigma$	variance ( $\sigma^2$ )	SD ( $\sigma$ )	median ( $M$ )
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13				
godfather	5	4	4	5	4	5	5	4	4	5	5	5	5	60	0,237	0,51	5
supporter	5	3	5	4	5	3	5	5	4	4	4	5	4	56	0,521	0,75	4
friend	4	3	4	3	4	3	4	5	3	4	4	3	4	48	0,367	0,63	4
specialist	4	3	4	3	3	3	4	4	3	3	4	4	3	45	0,249	0,52	3
safeguard	4	3	4	2	2	3	4	3	2	3	4	3	3	40	0,533	0,76	3
tactician	4	3	2	3	3	2	3	3	2	3	4	3	3	38	0,379	0,64	3
opportunist	2	2	2	3	1	2	2	2	3	2	3	2	3	29	0,331	0,60	2
bomb	3	1	3	2	1	2	2	2	1	3	2	2	3	27	0,533	0,76	2
rebel	2	1	3	1	1	1	1	2	2	2	1	2	2	21	0,391	0,65	2
obstacle	1	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	1	1	15	0,130	0,38	1

Table 3: Descriptions of internal stakeholders and communication recommendations

NAMING STAKEHOLDERS	DESCRIPTION	COMMUNICATION RECOMMENDATIONS	LEVEL OF INTEREST
GODFATHER	High-status leader with significant influence and a supportive stance toward the project.	Proactively engage and tailor communication to their needs to maintain support.	60
SUPPORTER	Often a project leader, shows high interest and positivity, though may be passive.	Activate their support through engagement and motivation.	56
FRIEND	Positively inclined with low organizational power, like a colleague.	Serve as advisors and information sources	48
SPECIALIST	Key for their technical expertise despite limited power.	Keep informed and consult as technical advisors.	45
SAFEGUARD	Focused on analytical, data-driven decisions, with a generally positive outlook.	Back strategies with data and analysis, and value their verification advice.	40
TACTICIAN	Plays a critical role in decisions but has an unclear position.	Align project goals with their interests to boost engagement.	38
OPPORTUNIST	Shows low interest, engaging in minor tasks.	Communicate with caution and understanding to avoid negative impacts.	29
BOMB	In leadership but opposes the project.	Identify early and plan strategic interventions to limit their hindrance.	27
REBEL	High leadership, opposes project.	Utilize influential supporters to diminish their opposition.	21
OBSTACLE	Middle management that actively seeks to impede the project.	Illustrate the project's organizational benefits and manage their involvement carefully.	15

We analyzed our results using the Nominal Group Technique (NGT), as shown in Table 1. From 13 participants, we collected 10 names of internal stakeholders, ensuring comprehensive understanding. Table 1 presents demographic data of respondents involved in a research study focusing on procurement experts. The table outlines the sex, age, total work experience, and years in procurement for each of the 13 participants. Among these participants, there are eight males (m) and five females (w), with ages ranging from 26 to 59 years. The total work experience among the respondents varies from 5 to 39 years, indicating a wide spectrum of professional backgrounds. The years spent specifically in procurement also show diversity, ranging from 3 to 37 years. This variation in demographic and professional backgrounds of the respondents provides a comprehensive view of the experience and perspectives within the field of procurement, facilitating a robust analysis of internal stakeholder dynamics based on the substantial and varied experiences of the participants.

Descriptions were added to these names for clarity among participants. Each participant rated the stakeholders' interest levels individually using a Likert scale from 1 to 5.

In our study, we utilized descriptive statistics to analyze the diverse opinions of procurement experts on internal stakeholders. The findings revealed a spectrum of interest levels, with "obstacle" garnering the least and "godfather" the most interest. Notably, significant shifts in interest were observed, particularly from "opportunist" to "tactician", indicating a need for increased motivation during such transitions. Conversely, minor shifts from "bomb" to "opportunist" and from "tactician" to "safeguard" suggested low participation interest but high obstruction tendency, and a neutral yet positive stance towards strategy, respectively. These insights are crucial for understanding stakeholder dynamics in strategic procurement.

Statistical measures like variance ( $\sigma^2$ ), standard deviation ( $\sigma$ ), and median (M) re-veal the diversity in subjects' views on internal stakeholder strategy interest. Higher variance and standard deviation signify more diverse opinions. The highest dispersion is seen in "bomb" and "safeguard" ( $\sigma^2 = 0.533$ ), and the lowest in "obstacle" ( $\sigma^2 = 0.130$ ). The highest deviation ( $\sigma = 0.76$ ) is also observed in "bomb" and "safeguard", while the lowest is in "obstacle" ( $\sigma = 0.38$ ). Median values (M) indicate the majority interest rating for each stakeholder. This analysis clarifies the varied perceptions and opinions among respondents regarding different internal stakeholders.

Table 2 outlines internal stakeholders' descriptions, characteristics, and communication method recommendations, providing a clear understanding of interaction complexities in strategic procurement. This aids in managing internal stakeholders and validating procurement strategies.

Table 3 resulting from the NGT's final step, demon-

strates the consensus-based classification of internal stakeholders in strategic procurement during the validation of a procurement strategy. It details stakeholders' relationships, from most to least supportive, and specifies communication strategies for low-importance procurement categories. This reflects a modern organizational emphasis on fostering individual autonomy, accountability, and active engagement through critical analysis.

## 5 Discussion

The discussion around the classification and management of internal stakeholders in procurement strategy validation has highlighted significant insights. It emerged from the dialogues with participants that internal stakeholders are dynamic entities; their initial positions may shift, indicating the fluid nature of stakeholder attitudes and the importance of continuous engagement and monitoring. This adaptability is particularly crucial for groups with an ambivalent stance towards the issue, underscoring the need for tailored communication strategies to address their specific needs and concerns.

The Nominal Group Technique (NGT) was chosen for its structured process, rich data generation, and consensus-building capabilities. NGT ensures equal participation, minimizing bias, and involves independent idea generation, group discussion, and ranking, ideal for complex issues like stakeholder classification. NGT produces prioritized ideas, aiding decision-making and ensuring strategies are accepted and supported. However, it can be time-consuming and relies on skilled facilitation. It may not delve as deeply into underlying reasons as other qualitative methods. Despite these limitations, NGT's strengths in structured, inclusive discussions make it effective for classifying and managing internal stakeholders in strategic procurement.

In the context of previous studies, our findings resonate with study Månsson (2018), who emphasized the criticality of the credibility of information in synthesizing perspectives from various internal stakeholders. This aspect underlines the importance of not only understanding the varied positions of stakeholders but also ensuring the reliability of the information exchanged, which forms the basis for effective communication and strategy implementation.

Our research aligns with previous studies (Chinyio & Olomolaiye 2009) in stakeholder management, particularly in developing strategies based on stakeholders' power and interest. Yet, our study stands out by tailoring communication strategies to stakeholders' attitudes, organizing them into distinct categories such as positive, undecided positive, negative independent, and outright negative. Like earlier research Chinyio & Olomolaiye (2009), we emphasize the vital role of ongoing engagement and monitoring of stakeholders in executing successful procurement

strategies. Distinguishing our work from Chinyio & Olomolaiye (2009), is our approach and depth in analyzing stakeholders. While prior research predominantly uses a power-interest grid, our study delves into stakeholders' attitudes toward strategy execution, offering a richer, more intricate understanding of their attitudes and behaviors. This method recognizes the complexities in stakeholder dynamics that go beyond simple power and interest dynamics. Our focus on rigorous data collection methods enhances the validity of our findings, demonstrating a detailed exploration of stakeholder dynamics. However, this approach necessitates regular reassessment of stakeholder attitudes, diverging from the more stationary power-interest analysis. Overall, our research, alongside previous studies, significantly advances the field of stakeholder management in procurement, with our unique emphasis on attitudes providing deeper insights into the nuances of stakeholder relationships.

Our study introduces a straightforward method for stakeholder categorization, enabling managers to swiftly identify and implement suitable communication strategies. This approach, focused on tailoring communication to each stakeholder group, aligns stakeholder attitudes directly with communication methods. In contrast, other models like Murray-Webster & Simon (2006), may necessitate more in-depth analysis, rendering them more appropriate for detailed stakeholder management scenarios. In summary, our research offers a simpler method for stakeholder categorization and communication based on attitude. Other studies (Murray-Webster & Simon, 2006) provide more elaborate frameworks, encompassing power, interest, and attitude, suitable for more detailed applications in stakeholder management.

Our study enhances the understanding of stakeholder management in procurement by offering a detailed perspective on internal stakeholder dynamics. We categorize stakeholders into distinct groups - positive, undecided positive, negative independent, and negative - each with tailored communication strategies. This approach illuminates the complex and diverse attitudes of stakeholders, aiding in crafting adaptable and effective communication methods. Nevertheless, the fluid nature of stakeholder positions and our focus on procurement limit the generalizability of our findings, indicating the need for regular strategy reassessment and broader applicability. Future research should delve into how stakeholder attitudes evolve over time and the long-term effectiveness of these communication strategies in varied organizational contexts, thereby enriching the overall understanding of stakeholder management in different business sectors.

## 6 Conclusion

Our research marks a significant advancement in understanding stakeholder dynamics for strategic implemen-

tation within organizations. It stands out by categorizing stakeholders into four groups based on their attitudes towards procurement strategy, thereby offering managers a refined, adaptable framework for customizing communication and leadership strategies, leading to more efficient and sustainable strategy implementation. This innovative approach enhances the effectiveness of stakeholder engagement, responding to the dynamic nature of stakeholder attitudes and is applicable across various countries and industries, addressing universal dynamics. Our study not only contributes to stakeholder management literature but also provides practical tools for managers, supported by robust statistical validation using Cronbach's alpha and Spearman's correlation coefficients, and further reinforced by t-tests. This approach, which aligns communication strategies with distinct stakeholder groups, adds a novel dimension to stakeholder management, underlining the intricate relationship between stakeholder attitudes and effective communication.

This study's limitations stem from its narrow sample and focus on private sector procurement within a particular nation, potentially affecting the universality of its findings. The specific context may not reflect the varied dynamics of larger, diverse populations or other organizational environments, and differences in cultural, economic, and regulatory aspects could impact the efficacy of the strategies and stakeholder categorizations proposed. Additionally, the fluid nature of communication in stakeholder management suggests that strategies successful in our context may not translate universally. Consequently, the study's insights, while valuable for a specific national context, have limited broader application. Future research should include longitudinal and cross-industry studies in diverse cultural settings to broaden stakeholder management understanding, develop globally applicable communication models, and contribute to establishing international standards in this domain.

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and optimizing procurement processes. With over two decades of diverse experience, including roles in Spain.

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